



Metabolic and hepatic effects of bloodletting in dysmetabolic iron overload syndrome: A randomized controlled study in 274 patients

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Résumé en anglais

Dysmetabolic iron overload syndrome (DIOS) is a common cause of hyperferritinemia, accounting for a mild increase of iron stores in insulin-resistant subjects. Iron removal could improve insulin sensitivity. We performed a prospective, randomized, controlled trial (NCT01015525) in nondiabetic DIOS patients with hepatic iron >50 µmol/g at magnetic resonance imaging to compare the metabolic and hepatic outcomes of 1-year maintenance of serum ferritin levels <50 µg/L by bloodletting associated with lifestyle and diet advice (LFDA) to those of LFDA only. Patients were randomly assigned (1:1) with stratification by center (n = 8) and hyperglycemia (>5.6 mmol/L). Sample size was calculated to provide 90% power and a difference in fasting glycemia of 0.25 mmol/L. Analysis was done in an intention-to-treat population. In 2010-2014, 146 patients were randomly assigned to receive venesections with LFDA and 128 to LFDA only. At the end of the study, comparison of iron-depleted patients and controls showed ferritin levels 71 ± 48 µg/L after removal of 4.9 ± 1.6 L of blood versus 733 ± 277 µg/L ($P < 0.0001$), glycemia 5.44 ± 0.7 versus 5.49 ± 0.7 mmol/L ($P = 0.57$), body weight $+0.5 \pm 4.3\%$ versus $-0.6 \pm 3.3\%$ ($P = 0.03$), homeostasis model of assessment of insulin resistance 3.39 versus 2.40 ($P = 0.002$), alanine aminotransaminase 33 ± 22 versus 37 ± 21 IU/L ($P = 0.10$), aspartate aminotransaminase 27 ± 13 versus 27 ± 10 IU/L ($P = 0.81$), gamma-glutamyl transferase 54 ± 138 versus 49 ± 35 IU/L ($P = 0.72$), Fatty Liver Index 58.9 ± 24.6 versus 61.2 ± 22.9 ($P = 0.37$), and Fibrosis-4 score 1.5 ± 0.6 versus 1.30 ± 0.6 ($P = 0.51$). Fatigue occurred in 25.3% of venesected patients versus 2.3% of controls ($P < 0.0001$). In the subgroup of patients who lost weight, glycemia, homeostasis model of assessment of insulin resistance, serum ferritin, lipid profile, and liver function tests improved irrespective of bloodletting.

CONCLUSION: In DIOS patients, iron depletion by bloodletting does not improve metabolic and hepatic features, is associated with weight gain, and is not as well tolerated as expected; sustained modification of diet and lifestyle habits remains the first therapeutic intervention in DIOS. (Hepatology 2017;65:465-474).

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